



Article

Māasiri 'ālamgīrī As A Historical Source

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Abstract: This paper examines the *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī*, the major chronicle authored by Mirza Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta'īd Khān (d. 1136/1723–24), as a foundational source for the political, administrative, military, and cultural history of the Baburid Empire during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr (r. 1658–1707). Although biographical data on Musta'īd Khān is limited, references within his own work establish his close involvement in imperial administration as *munshī*, *dīwān*, and eventually scribe of Aurangzeb's confidential decrees. These positions granted him direct access to official documentation and intimate knowledge of court dynamics, enhancing the reliability and depth of his account. Commissioned by the senior courtier Ināyatullāh Khān and completed in 1122/1710–11, the chronicle synthesizes four categories of sources: imperial decrees and court records, the author's personal observations, contemporary testimonies, and (for the first decade of the reign) Muḥammad Kāzīm's *Ālamgīrnāma*. Structured annalistically, the *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* offers exceptionally detailed insight into Baburid state formation. It documents provincial administration, the composition and command structure of the army, fiscal systems, judicial institutions, and the operations of numerous central and provincial offices. The chronicle's accounts of military campaigns spanning Bengal, Assam, Bijapur, Golconda, Kabul, Ajmer, and other regions shed light on logistical challenges, local resistance, and environmental crises. It further illuminates Aurangzeb's religious policies, the compilation of the *Fatāwā-yi 'Ālamgīrī*, and the emperor's personal conduct. Additional sections address cultural production, genealogical information, natural phenomena, and diplomatic relations with Bukhara, Balkh, Kashgar, Iran, and Arabian states. By integrating extensive documentary evidence with firsthand observation, the *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* emerges as an indispensable source for reassessing the political and institutional history of the late Baburid Empire. This study highlights its historiographical significance and its value for understanding imperial governance during a transformative era.

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1. Introduction

The work by Mirza Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta'īd Khan (d. 1136/1723–1724) *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* ("The Great Deeds of 'Ālamgīr Aurangzeb") holds a special importance as a historical source in the study of the period of the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb (1658/1068–1118/1707) of Baburid dynasty that ruled India for 332 ears (932/1526–1274/1858).

There is scarcity of information concerning the life and scholarly activity of Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta'īd Khan which is mainly stated in references within his own work. Besides, for example, he is the author of *Mir'āt al-'Ālam* [1]. He reports that he served as *munshī* and *dīwān* under Bakhtāwar Khān (d. 15 Rabī' I 1096 / 19 February 1685), one of Aurangzeb's officials. Following Bakhtāwar Khān's death, Aurangzeb called him to the imperial court and appointed him to the task of recording Thursday events (*waqā'i'-nigārī*

yi rūz-i panj-shanba) [2]. Shortly afterwards, by imperial decree dated 27 Rabī‘ II 1096 / 2 April 1685, Muḥammad Ṣāqī was assigned to the service in the *Nigār-khāna*. Writing about events from the mid-1114s / late 1702, he refers to himself as the scribe of Aurangzeb’s confidential decrees, noting that by royal decree he was transferred from the office of chronicler to the service of *Inshā-yi Nazarāt*.

2. Materials and Methods

The article has been prepared on the basis of source analyses and comparative methods and methodologies. It has been discussed primary historical sources of the time in order to shed light the political activity of Baburids. The study of their activity shows their state affairs in the statehood history of Uzbek nation.

3. Results

Though limited, these information leads us to draw two conclusions. First, Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta‘id Khān was a man of extensive information, endowed with deep knowledge and experience. Second, as an employee of Aurangzeb’s court, he was well acquainted with the events unfolding both at the court and in the empire at large. This conclusion is further supported by the words of his patron, Ināyatullāh Khān. While inviting Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta‘id Khān to compose the present work, he remarked: “In praising Aurangzeb, you are unrivalled” which means that he knew both the emperor and his era intimately.

As for the history of the work, according to the author, one of the eminent officials of Shāh ‘Ālam Bahādur’s (1118/1707–1124/1712) palace Ināyatullāh Khān, who was the aforementioned, initiated Muḥammad Ṣāqī with the proposal to narrate the last forty ears of Aurangzeb’s reign. Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta‘id Khān entitled the work *Mā‘āsir-i ‘Ālamgīrī*, noting that the very title alluded to the date of its completion. According to this chronogram, the work was completed in 1122/1710–1711.

While speaking about Inayatullah Khan, Muhammad Saqi Musta‘id Khan describes him as one of Aurangzeb’s trusted men. The work also provides several references to him in different places. In particular, Inayatullah Khan was in the service of Aurangzeb, advancing from the position of superintendent of the jewel house (1099/1688–89) to that of *Dīwān-i Khāliṣa va Tan* (1114/1703). During the reign of Shah ‘Ālam Bahadur, he held this office until 1121/1709, after which he was appointed to the post of *Khān-i Sāmān-i Nazārat* (a supervisory branch of the *Khān-i Sāmān*’s responsibilities, concerned with oversight and regulation of household provisioning), and subsequently to the governorship (*subahdārī* – (governor) — the chief provincial administrator of a *subah* (province) in the Baburid Empire, combining civil, military, and fiscal authority) of Kashmir [3].

During the reigns of next Baburid rulers sucha as Jahandar Shah (1124/1712–1125/1713) and Farrukh Siyar (1125/1713–1131/1719), he pilgrimed to Mecca and Medina (1126/1714–1129/1717), and upon his return he was reappointed as *Dīwān-i Khāliṣa va Tan*. Shortly thereafter (1131/1719), he was once again entrusted with the duties of *Khān-i Sāmān*, a position he retained under the next Baburid ruler, Muhammad Shah (1131/1719–1161/1748). Inoyatullah Khan passed away in 1726 [4].

Concerning the sources of the work *Ma‘āsir-i ‘Ālamgīrī*, it should be noted that Muhammad Saqi Musta‘id Khan based his account primarily on four types of materials:

1. Official court documents: imperial decrees (*farmāns*), *yārliqs*, and court chronicles;
2. The author’s own observations and personal experiences;
3. The recollections and written testimonies of contemporaries and participants in events;
4. Muhammad Kazim Munshi’s work *‘Ālamgīrnāma*.

The fact that the author relied primarily on the first category of sources – official documents can be observed on every page of the work in the process of composing the work. Besides, Muhammad Ṣāqī Mustā'īd Khan also made thoughtful use of his own personal experiences, as well as the recollections and written testimonies of contemporaries. Therefore, he writes: "I have also recorded [events] on the basis of what I myself witnessed". In one place, he emphasizes that he was personally present when Aurangzeb spoke on a certain matter; in another place he adds his own observations while describing an official: "I was acquainted with that noble man. He was indeed of most praiseworthy character, but he lacked ability when it came to demonstrating his services". Stating this, he fills the events based on his own observations. In another part, he notes: "the prince described his ailments in the following manner" or introduces a report with the phrase "Muhammad Ikhlas narrated that...". In one more other place, he records: "Khwaja Muhammad Ya'qub made a draft of a *nigār-nāma* and reported that...", thereby he points to the diversity of the sources on which he used.

As noted above, the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī*, written at the emperor's command, encompasses a fifty-year span of Baburid history. The events of the first decade are narrated on the basis of the *'Ālamgīrnāma*, a chronicle composed by Muhammad Kazim ibn Muhammad Amin Munshi, who Aurangzeb's personal secretary and died in Delhi in 1092/1681 [5]. Explaining why Muhammad Kazim's work was confined to only the initial ten ears, Muhammad Ṣāqī Mustā'īd Khan notes: "Since [Aurangzeb] put greater value on the construction of inner [spiritual] foundations than on the narration of outward occurrences, he forbade the continuation of the chronicle". The author further gives explanation of his use of Muhammad Kazim's work as follows: "If you take in concise form the ten ears of history written by the master of eloquence in word and meaning, Mirza Muhammad Kazim, author of the *'Ālamgīrnāma*, and adopt it as an introduction to your own composition, then both a rank for the page and a fifty-year account will thereby be obtained" [6].

Thus, Muḥammad Ṣoqī Musta'īdkhān based the section of his work that recounts the events of the first decade entirely on Muḥammad Kāzim's *'Ālamgīrnāma*. This becomes evident when the two works are compared.

Considering that, the *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* may be conditionally divided into two parts: (1) the description of the first decade, and (2) the narrative of the subsequent forty ears.

The events are given ear by ear in the work. In accordance with the tradition of medieval historiography, the information is not arranged thematically. Thus, details concerning political, military, administrative, economic-financial, social, religious, cultural, dynastic, and natural phenomena, as well as foreign relations, are recorded on different pages of the work at different length.

As is known, after the death of Aurangzeb (28 Dhū al-Qa'da 1118 / Friday, 3 March 1707), the baburid Empire entered a period of decline. From this perspective, Aurangzeb's reign may be regarded as occupying a distinctive and pivotal position in the study of the Baburid polity [7]. Of particular significance in the work is the information about the mechanisms of governance, the administration of the *subas* (provinces), and the strategies of territorial expansion. Muḥammad Ṣoqī Musta'īdkhān furnishes especially valuable notes of Aurangzeb's numerous military campaigns in Bengal, Assam, Bijapur, Golconda, Kabul, Sūgar, Ajmer, and other regions. These notes proved vast important facts about the difficulties of military campaigns by Aurangzeb, in addition to resistance mounted by local rulers and populations, shortages of provisions, widespread famine, and outbreaks of epidemic diseases such as plague and cholera [8].

Of particular importance in the work are the details provided regarding the organization of the army: the combat structure of the army: *manğlay* (vanguard), *ghul* (main body), *hirawul* (advance guard), *barongār* (right wing), *jawangār* (left wing), *qarāwul* (rearguard/guard detachment), *chindawul* (reserve force), and *taloya/taliya* (scouting or

forward detachment); military units: *tābinān* (retainers), *tabardārān* (axemen), *banduqchiyān* (musketeers), *banduqzan* (gunners), *tupchi* (artillerymen), *barq-andāz* (rocketeers), and *tufangchiān* (matchlock-men); medical staff: *mardum-i bāhir* (military physicians); offices and ranks: *tupkhāna* (artillery park), *tupkhānay-i kalān* (grand arsenal), *tup* (cannon), *tufang* (musket), *banduq* (arquebus), *bandor* (ballista), *shuturnāl* (camel-mounted swivel-gun), *gajnāl* (large swivel-gun), and *gawharnāl* (pearl-shaped cannon); weaponry: *tupkhāna* (artillery park), *tupkhānay-i kalān* (grand arsenal), *tup* (cannon), *tufang* (musket), *banduq* (arquebus), *bandor* (ballista), *shuturnāl* (camel-mounted swivel-gun), *gajnāl* (large swivel-gun), and *gawharnāl* (pearl-shaped cannon); military-engineering constructions: *murchil* (battering ram), *muljūr* (siege engine), *qal'a* (fortress), *damdama* (rampart), and *fatila* (slow match); and military symbols (*tugh*, *bayraq*, *nāgara*). For instance, in a campaign against Kabul in the mid-1085/late 1674, Aurangzeb issued the following order to the commanders: "When you ascend the mountain pass, let the *hirawul* division first cross over and secure the far side. On the following day, the military physicians and the *ghul* division proceed [9]. The *chindawul* division remain on this side. On the third day, if the *barongār* division cannot advance independently, they proceed in the company of the *hirawul*. Thereafter, the *jawangār* division cross together with the *chindawul*" (p. 63).

The work contains abundant valuable information on the structure and governance of the state including central administration and court services: *dīwān* (chancery), *khānisamānī* (household provisioning), *urdū-bardārī* (camp logistics), *ṣadārat* (the *ṣadr*'s office, religious endowments), *wazārat* (vizierate), *‘imārat* (public works), *buy ūtāt* (palace households/departments), *nażārat-i ḥaram* (oversight of the harem), *bakhshigirīn dāgh* va *taṣhiḥa* (pay-office registration and audit), *ghuslkhāna* (baths), *chīnīkhāna* (china/porcelain store), *filkhāna* (elephant stables), *tasbīkhāna* (devotional/religious chamber), *daftardārī* (record-keeping), *ābdārī* (water service), *jawāhirkhāna* (jewel house), *zargarkhāna* (goldsmiths' workshop), *qushkhāna* (aviary/falconry), *kurhāna*, *naqqāshkhāna* (painters' atelier), *nigārkhāna* (picture gallery), *wāqi'a-naवīsī* (historiography), and so forth; as well as the territorial-administrative apparatus—*subadār* (provincial governor), *qal'adār* (fort commandant), *kotwāl/kutwāl* (city prefect), *thānādār* (police-station chief), *marzbān* (frontier warden), *fawjdār* (military governor), etc. The work also records several financial-administrative and service structures at central administration and in the provinces: *dīvān-i khāss* (privy treasury/council), *dīvān-i khor ul-khalofa*, *dīvān-i daftar* (records office), *dīvān-i khāliṣa* va *tan* (office over crown/"khāliṣa" lands and cash stipends), *niyābat-i dīvānī* (deputyship in the *dīvān*), *ṣāhib-begī* (high court office), *dīvān-i suba* (provincial *dīvān*), *pīshdast-i dīvānī-yi khāliṣa* (under-secretary of the *khāliṣa* *dīvān*), among others. Such public institutions are observable in the *bakhshī* (paymaster) establishment: *mīr bakhshī* (chief paymaster), *bakhshī-yi mulk* (civil paymaster), *bakhshigirī* (the pay-office), *bakhshigirī-yi awwal/duvvum/sevvum* (first/second/third pay offices), *bakhshī-yi tīrandāzān* (paymaster of the archers), *bakhshī-yi awwal/duvvum/sevvum* (first/second/third paymasters), *pīshdast-i bakhshī* (under-secretary in the *bakhshī* office), *bakhshī-yi mamālik* (paymaster of the domains), *bakhshigirī-yi pādshāhzāda* (princely pay office), *bakhshī-yi ahadiyān* (paymaster of the royal *ahadī* troopers), *bakhshigirī-yi tan* (cash-stipend office), and *mīr bakhshī-yi ahadiyān* (chief paymaster of the *ahadī*).

Besides, Muhammad Șoqī Musta‘idkhān also provides information on a number of other offices that draw the researcher's attention. These are: *ṣadr al-ṣudūr* (chief religious authority, head of the ‘*ulamā*’), *khānisamān* (master of household provisioning), *muhtasib* (market inspector and supervisor of morals), *ikhtiṣāb* (office of public order/market regulation), *tijārat begī* (superintendent of trade), *kūrbegī* (prefect of the city/court officer), *mīr-i tuzuk* (master of court ceremonies and regulations), *mīr-i tuzuk-i awwal* (chief master of ceremonies), *bakāwal* (officer in charge of royal kitchen/provisions), *qushbegī* (chief of court protocol), *wāqi'anigār* (chronicler), *wāqi'anavīs* (court diarist), *wāqi'akhwān* (reader of chronicles), *akhtabbegī* (chief of the stables / equerries), *taḥwīlādār* (treasurer / keeper of revenues), *mīr-i munī* (chief steward), *mīr-i shikār* (master of the hunt), *mīr-i qūl*, *hakīm al-*

mulk (chief physician), *daftardār* (chief record-keeper), and *nakhjīrgīr* (royal gamekeeper, master of hunting expeditions).

The *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* also highlights information pertaining to judicial affairs during the reign of Aurangzeb. For instance, it records details about the *qāzīs* (judges) including the *qāzī* (judge), *qāzī al-quz̄zāt* (chief judge), *qāzī-yi urdū* (camp judge), *qāzī-yi lashkar* (army judge), and *qāzī-yi dār al-khilāfa* (chief judge of the capital), as well as their place and role in the socio-political life of the empire, and valuable evidence regarding the individuals who held such offices. The author notes, for example, that in 1094/1683 Aurangzeb issued a decree stipulating that individuals dismissed from judicial office were henceforth to be barred from reappointment to their former positions.

The *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* provides important information for the second half of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries on the feudal institutions of the Baburid state: *khāliṣa* (crown lands), *jāgīr* (land assignments), *zamīndārī* (landholding under zamīndārs), and *tānkhāh* (land grants for service). It also records data concerning the allocation of salary: *sālona* (annual), *rūzāna* (daily), *yawmiyya* (per diem), and *māhāna* (monthly) as well as the taxes levied from the population and the provinces [10]. Such information is of considerable importance for the study of the socio-economic conditions of the empire during this period.

The *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* also contains a lot of evidence concerning the construction activities undertaken by the Baburids, including fortresses, mosques, almshouses, gardens, and reservoirs. In addition, the work provides information on the renaming of certain forts and localities, together with the reasons for such changes. For example, during Aurangzeb's reign Kuchbihār was renamed *'Ālamgīrnagar*, Jām became *Islāmnagar*, Jolkām was changed to *Islāmābād*, Marāzak to *Fathābād*, Bhagnagar to *Haydarābād*, Aklūh to *Asadnagar*, and Ratkhur to *Fīrūzābād*.

Another noteworthy aspect of the *Mā'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* is its weighty information regarding Aurangzeb's religious outlook and the policies he pursued in this sphere. It records that Aurangzeb adhered to Sunnism in its Ḥanafī school, scrupulously fulfilled all the obligations of Islam, and spent his free time, when released from affairs of state, in conversation with religious scholars (p. 231), engaging in discussions on various topics of Islamic doctrine. As a result of such exchanges, and at Aurangzeb's initiative, the compilation of the *Fatāwā-yi 'Ālamgīrī* ("Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr's Legal Opinions"), a comprehensive work of Islamic jurisprudence, was undertaken. It should be noted, however, that in some writings Aurangzeb is represented as a bigoted and obscurantist statesman [11].

Indeed, Aurangzeb was a strict ruler; et in his personal life and daily habits he remained markedly modest. According to the testimony of Muḥammad Sāqī Musta'id Khān, Aurangzeb displayed uncompromising severity even toward his own sons when the interests of the state were at stake. The chronicle records accounts of his conflicts with his sons Muḥammad Akbar, Muḥammad Mu'azzam, and Muḥammad Kam Bakhsh. In our estimation, any evaluation of Aurangzeb's personality and political activity must also take into consideration further details reported by Muḥammad Sāqī Musta'id Khān, namely, that Aurangzeb was the target of several assassination attempts or plots against his life. Some of the would-be assassins were handed over to the custody of the *kuṭwāl* (fort commandant), while others, by Aurangzeb's order, were set free [12]. In certain instances, moreover, Aurangzeb even decreed the assignment of a pension (*rūzāna*) to such individuals. For example, on 21 Sha'bān 1087 (29 October 1676), while returning from the congregational mosque, an "unfortunate man" rushed toward him with a drawn sword; et the guards apprehended him in time. Aurangzeb, however, pardoned the man and granted him a daily allowance of half a rupee.

Muḥammad Sāqī Musta'id Khān records that Musavī Khān who was described as "noble in lineage, loyal in merit and skill," and serving as *dīwān* of the Deccan province, was a descendant of Aurangzeb's predecessors (p. 148). Such testimony constitutes further

evidence necessitating a more profound and impartial study of the relationship between state policy and religious outlook in Aurangzeb's career. In this regard, the records in *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* contain highly vital information on such matters as the demolition of idol-temples, the enforcement of Sharī'a regulations, the functioning of the Sharī'a courts (*maḥkama-yi shar'iyya*), and Aurangzeb's attitudes toward the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, toward representatives of the Naqshbandiyya and Juybāriyya orders, toward the *sayyids*, ascetics of various kinds, and ordinary subjects.

Cultural life in Aurangzeb era, the information is noteworthy about poets, scholars, calligraphers, painters, and artists such as Mullā Shāh Badahshī, Mullā 'Azīzullāh, Mullā Sosiya, Mullā 'Avaz, Mawlawī 'Abdullāh Siyālqutī, Dīyānat Khān, Mīr Hādī, Mullā Sa'īd, Mīrzā Muḥammad ibn Khwāja Qāsim, Khwāja Ismā'īl, Maḥābat Khān, Muḥlis Khān, and Mullā 'Abdullāh Ṭabāh, as well as physicians such as Ḥakīm Muḥammad Amīn, Ḥakīm Ibrāhīm, Ḥakīm Mahdī, and Ḥakīm Ṣādiq.

It is also worth noting that the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* contains a range of highly valuable references to seventeenth-century historians who contributed substantially to the recording of Baburid history [13]. Among them are Wāriskhān, the author of the third volume of the *Pādshāhnāma*; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambū, compiler of the *'Amal-i Ṣāliḥ al-mawsūm ba-Shāhjāhnāma*; Muḥammad Kāzīm Munshī, author of the *'Ālamgīrnāma*; and Bakhtāwar Khān, author of the *Mir'āt al-'Ālam*.

The information provided by Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta'id Khān is also of considerable value to precisely know the genealogy of the Baburids, particularly with respect to the descendants of Aurangzeb [14]. For example, the work records details concerning Aurangzeb's five sons (Muḥammad Sultān, Muḥammad Mu'azzam, Muḥammad A'zam, Muḥammad Akbar, and Muḥammad Kambakhsh), his five daughters (Zebunnisā, Zīnatunnisā, Badrunnisā, Zubdatunnisā, and Maḥrunnisā Begums), as well as his sons-in-law, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, and their descendants.

The author also covers natural phenomena, recording such events as earthquakes, solar eclipses, the appearance of rainbows, as well as the recurrent floods and deluges that frequently occurred in the Indian subcontinent [15].

The other valuable aspects of the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* as an important historical source is its rich information regarding the relations of the Baburid Empire in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with the Khanate of Bukhara, Balkh, Kashgar, Iran, and certain Arab states. In particular, with respect to the diplomatic exchanges between the Khanate of Bukhara and the Baburid court, the author provides a series of important details that shed light on the identities of ambassadors, the timing and duration of their missions, the reception they were accorded at various locations, and the general character, directions, and level of bilateral relations. Such evidence substantially enriches our understanding of the diplomatic and interregional connections of the baburid state during Aurangzeb's reign.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, we have provided only a general characterization of the information contained in the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī*. Nevertheless, even this brief survey makes it clear that the work stands as a source of fundamental importance for the study of Baburid history in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Its breadth of coverage from political and military affairs to administrative institutions, cultural and intellectual life, religious policy, and international relations renders it indispensable for any comprehensive reconstruction of the period. Moreover, the detail and specificity with which Muḥammad Ṣāqī Musta'id Khān records events enhance both the reliability and the historiographical value of the chronicle, securing its place among the principal sources for understanding the reign of Aurangzeb and the dynamics of the Baburid Empire at large.

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